

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2161

Introduced by Assembly Member Hancock

February 21, 2006

An act to add Section 16519 to the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to public social services, and making an appropriation therefor.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2161, as introduced, Hancock. Child welfare services: resource family pilot program.

Existing law requires the placement of dependent children by the juvenile court according to specified procedures. Existing law requires the state, through the State Department of Social Services and county welfare departments, to establish and support a system of statewide child welfare, which includes services related to foster care placement of dependent children and adoption. Existing law provides for the licensure of foster care providers, and the approval of adoptive parents.

This bill would require the State Department of Social Services, in consultation with county welfare agencies, to develop and implement a pilot program to establish a unified resource family approval process to replace the existing multiple processes for licensing foster family homes, approving relatives and nonrelated extended family members as foster care providers, and approving adoptive families, as provided in the bill. The bill would define a resource family for its purposes as an individual or couple that a participating county has approved to care for a related or unrelated child who is under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court or otherwise in the care of a county child welfare agency.

This bill would require the pilot program to be conducted in up to 5 counties that volunteer to participate. It would authorize the pilot program to continue through the 2009–10 fiscal year, or for 3 full fiscal years following the receipt of funding for the program, whichever is later.

Existing law establishes the Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Foster Care (AFDC-FC) program, under which counties provide payments to foster care providers on behalf of qualified children in foster care. The program is funded by a combination of federal, state, and county funds, with moneys from the General Fund being continuously appropriated to pay for the state's share of AFDC-FC costs. Existing law requires that a child be in one of 7 designated placements in order to be eligible for AFDC-FC.

This bill also would require a child placed in a resource family home to be eligible for AFDC-FC. By expanding eligibility standards for AFDC-FC benefits, this bill would make an appropriation. The bill would provide that a resource family be paid a specified AFDC-FC rate, and would apply existing sharing ratios for state financial participation.

This bill would make its implementation contingent upon the continued availability of federal funds for costs associated with the placement of children with resource families as provided in the bill.

Vote: $\frac{2}{3}$. Appropriation: yes. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. Section 16519 is added to the Welfare and
- 2 Institutions Code, to read:
- 3 16519. (a) The State Department of Social Services, in
- 4 consultation with county child welfare agencies, foster parent
- 5 associations, and other interested community parties, shall
- 6 develop and implement a pilot program to establish a unified,
- 7 family friendly, and child-centered resource family approval
- 8 process to replace the existing multiple processes for licensing
- 9 foster family homes, approving relatives and nonrelated extended
- 10 family members as foster care providers, and approving adoptive
- 11 families.
- 12 (b) (1) Up to five counties shall be selected to participate on a
- 13 voluntary basis in the pilot program, according to criteria

1 developed by the department in consultation with the County
2 Welfare Directors Association.

3 (2) Prior to implementing the pilot program, the department
4 shall establish standards for a unified home approval and
5 permanency assessment of a resource family, and the
6 requirements for placement in a resource family.

7 (c) (1) For the purposes of this section, “resource family”
8 means an individual or couple that a participating county has
9 approved to care for a related or unrelated child who is under the
10 jurisdiction of the juvenile court, or otherwise in the care of a
11 county child welfare agency.

12 (2) Subsequent to approval, a resource family shall be
13 considered eligible to provide foster care for related and
14 unrelated children in out-of-home placement, shall be considered
15 approved as an adoptive family, and shall not have to undergo
16 any additional approval or licensure as long as the family lives in
17 a county participating in the pilot program.

18 (3) Resource family assessment and approval means that the
19 applicant meets the standard for home approval, and has
20 successfully completed a permanency assessment. This approval
21 is in lieu of the existing foster care license, relative or nonrelated
22 extended family member approval, and the adoption home study
23 approval.

24 (4) Approval of a resource family does not guarantee an initial
25 or continued placement of a child with a resource family.

26 (d) It is the intent of the Legislature that all of the following
27 shall occur as a result of the pilot program:

28 (1) The pilot program shall improve safety, permanency, and
29 well-being for children in the child welfare system, consistent
30 with the federal child welfare outcomes and the Child Welfare
31 System Improvement and Accountability Act of 2001 (Chapter
32 678 of the Statutes of 2001), by enabling families to become
33 licensed or approved foster parents, and also be approved as
34 adoptive parents, via a single process, rather than the existing
35 multiple steps that are required.

36 (2) The assessment and preparation of resource families caring
37 for children in out-of-home placement shall enhance the safety
38 and protection of children, be family focused and
39 neighborhood-based, promote timely reunification, adoption, or

1 guardianship for children with suitable families, and seek to
2 minimize the number of placement changes for children.

3 (3) A resource family shall honor the child's natural
4 connections and promote the goal that the best interests of the
5 foster child remain the central focus during the placement and
6 decisionmaking processes.

7 (4) The pilot program shall include effective system oversight
8 and accountability, and shall provide appropriate due process
9 procedures for resource families.

10 (5) A resource family shall meet the single home approval and
11 permanency assessment standard, regardless of the child's case
12 plan goal, or the resource family's long-term care provision
13 goals.

14 (e) Implementation of the pilot program shall be contingent
15 upon the continued availability of federal Social Security Act
16 Title IV-E (42 U.S.C. Sec. 670) funds for costs associated with
17 placement of children with resource families assessed and
18 approved under the program.

19 (f) Notwithstanding Section 11402, a child placed with a
20 resource family shall be eligible for AFDC-FC payments. A
21 resource family shall be paid an AFDC-FC rate pursuant to
22 Sections 11460 and 11461. Sharing ratios for nonfederal
23 expenditures for all costs associated with activities related to the
24 approval of relatives and nonrelated extended family members
25 shall be in accordance with Section 10101.

26 (g) The pilot program shall be authorized to continue through
27 the end of the 2009–10 fiscal year, or through the end of the third
28 full fiscal year following the date that funds are made available
29 for its implementation, whichever of these dates is later.